United Nations A/54/129/Rev.1-E/1999/73/Rev.1

General Assembly
Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
28 September 1999

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda item 20 (b)
Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to the United Nations, including special economic assistance: special economic assistance to individual countries or regions

Economic and Social Council
Substantive session of 1999
Geneva, 5-30 July 1999
Agenda item 5
Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance

Progress made in the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of Antigua and Barbuda, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, and Saint Kitts and Nevis

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Background

1. Hurricane Georges struck the Eastern Caribbean (Antigua and Barbuda and Saint Kitts and Nevis) on 20 and 21 September 1998. Saint Kitts was the most damaged, and according to news reports the extent of the damage throughout the region indicates that it will probably take years before life returns to a normal state. On 23 September, all four island States sent disaster assistance requests to a variety of international and intra-Caribbean organizations. In the early morning hours of 22 September, hurricane Georges entered the Dominican Republic and continued its path through the entire country before striking neighbouring Haiti at approximately 2 a.m. on 23 September, having weakened when crossing the central mountain range in the Dominican Republic. It followed a South-East to northwesterly direction, which placed the eye of the storm over the Centre, Artibonite and North-West departments. The hurricane's path continued on Cuban territory, severely hitting the eastern provinces of the country, which were beginning to recover from a prolonged drought related to the "El Niño" phenomenon.

II. Overall United Nations system response to hurricane Georges

2. Together with United Nations resident coordinators and disaster management teams (in-country representatives of United Nations agencies), the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs activated its tools for coordination of international response as follows: (a) issuing situation reports to highlight unmet emergency requirements in order to mobilize international assistance and sum up international response; (b) channelling cash contributions for relief and immediate rehabilitation; (c) deploying United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams to assist the resident coordinators in the Dominican Republic and Haiti;

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(d) facilitating shipments of emergency relief supplies to some of the affected countries.

3. In all cases, the resident coordinator played a key role in coordinating the international assistance provided and in the design of rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes. In many cases, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the country team were also instrumental in heightening the importance of disaster preparedness, prevention and mitigation, for which purpose long-term national capacity-building programmes are being designed and/or conducted, as described below.[1]

A. Antigua and Barbuda

4. In Antigua, two deaths were reported and 15 people seriously injured as a direct result of hurricane Georges. In addition, approximately 1,650 homes were damaged, with partial or complete loss of roofing to 1,500 homes. Another 150 poorly constructed homes were completely destroyed. The towns along the southern coast were most severely affected. Electricity was not fully operational for almost three weeks and a number of phone lines are still not functional.

5. In Barbuda, according to the local government a total of 3,338 people were rendered homeless on the two islands, 1,762 homes were damaged and 390 destroyed. As in other affected countries, the storm curtailed the supply of electricity and phone services and hampered the distribution of water. The towns along the southern Antiguan coastline were devastated. Fire Island, All Saints, Liberta, Bolan, and Crab Hill were declared disaster areas as a result of extensive damage in the low- and middle-income neighbourhoods. The hospitals and airports on both islands were severely damaged, as were many businesses in Antigua and one school and two hotels in Barbuda.

B. St. Kitts and Nevis

6. In Saint Kitts, there were four confirmed deaths. According to a damage assessment conducted by the National Emergency Management Agency, hurricane Georges caused approximately $402 million worth of damage. Electricity and phone lines were completely disrupted, water facilities damaged and 85 per cent of private homes were damaged to a varying extent. Some 20 to 25 per cent of homes were totally destroyed. Roofs were blown off many schools and public buildings, including the main hospital and businesses. The airport's main terminal and control tower were also damaged. In the agricultural sector, 50 per cent of the 1999 sugar harvest is expected to be lost. Many major hotels were severely damaged, possibly affecting the tourist industry for a long time.

7. The northern and western areas of the island were the most damaged, but the southern tip (a major tourist site) also requires considerable repair. The tourist industry in Saint Kitts was also affected by the destruction of the main pier and berthing platform at Basseterre and the damage of several major hotels. Because Saint Kitts relies on its tourist industry for much of its national income, the economic effects of the hurricane will be more significant over the longer term. The loss of 50 per cent of the 1999 sugar harvest will also negatively impact the island's economy. Twenty-five per cent of the homes on Saint Kitts were destroyed, temporarily displacing 2,500 people.

8. In Nevis, the National Disaster Coordinator reported injuries but no deaths. Electricity and phone services were curtailed, and 35 per cent of all homes were damaged. Crops, mainly coconut trees, were seriously damaged. The National Disaster Coordinator indicates $1 million worth of damage to the electrical system and $2.5 million worth of damage to the agricultural sector. Damage to the housing sector is less severe in Nevis. Several schools and hotels in Nevis were damaged and many beaches were eroded.

III. Other international responses

9. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs mobilized US$ 100,000 for relief and immediate rehabilitation. In addition, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) provided $100,000 for emergency response coordination for Saint Kitts and Nevis and $50,000 for Antigua and Barbuda for emergency response coordination through the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Response Agency (CDERA). UNDP, in collaboration with the United Nations Volunteers and the White Helmets Initiative, also provided personnel for the assessment by CDERA, focusing on health, housing and community development. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) provided personnel for two weeks to assess the food situation in Saint Kitts and Nevis.

10. On 5 October 1998, the World Food Programme (WFP) sent an officer from the Latin America Bureau in Rome to assess the situation. An immediate relief operation was approved in the amount of $63,000 to assist 740 families, mainly households headed by women. A food basket (rice, wheat flour, margarine, canned meat) was

bought locally through the National Emergency Management Agency. Monitoring of the operation was carried out by officers from the WFP Office in Dominican Republic.

11. Having positioned personnel in Barbados prior to the hurricane's fury, the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance of the Bureau for Humanitarian Response of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was in a position to immediately deploy two three-person assessment teams to the eastern Caribbean. One team arrived in Saint Kitts and Nevis on 22 September and the other arrived in Antigua and Barbuda on 23 September. Equipment such as plastic sheeting, water bladders and 1,903 five-gallon water jugs were delivered to Antigua to be distributed to the other islands. The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) contributed approximately $150,000 to the effort.

IV. Progress in the rehabilitation/ reconstruction and disaster reduction phases

12. The majority of donors, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the European Union (EU), have redirected a good portion of their assistance programmes to satisfy some of the requirements in the rehabilitation and reconstruction costs, especially for rural infrastructure (roads and irrigation), road maintenance and repairs, and in the building of a food security safety net.

13. In order to strengthen national capacities in disaster preparedness, mitigation and management, UNDP and the World Health Organization (WHO)/Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) have designed and launched a longer-term capacity-building programme. The PAHO initiative focuses mainly on the health sector, and UNDP assistance aims at (a) strengthening the institutional and organizational capacities of each of the civil protection agencies; (b) supporting the preparation of a national disaster management plan, and providing planning and technical assistance to CDERA at its Barbados location.

14. CDERA has compiled a list of needs and an appeal which is being circulated among donors for funding. UNDP is assisting in the design of a regional preparedness programme to be executed at the eastern Caribbean level, with the support of CDERA and the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

V. Dominican Republic

Introduction

15. Although the majority of the country's 7.5 million inhabitants were affected, directly or indirectly, the hurricane dealt an even more severe blow to those already living in poor conditions. The economic damage has been estimated at US$ 2.2 billion (equivalent to 14 per cent of the national gross domestic product (GDP) or about half of the country's export value of 1997).[2]

16. A significant part of the vegetation in the country suffered major damage and, most significantly, agricultural output registered major losses of yields of basic foodstuff, such as rice, banana and cassava. In terms of loss in infrastructure, a significant portion of the country's telecommunications system, as well as the distribution of electricity and water, were heavily affected. Many bridges were either destroyed or heavily damaged as well, many beyond repair. Following the initial impact of the hurricane, the Government of the Dominican Republic proceeded to swiftly set in motion various emergency programmes, most of which were supported by the international donor community. The national authorities favoured an integrated and sustainable rehabilitation process, in consultation with national and international development institutions. The international community, including the United Nations system, responded immediately and in the months that followed in an effort to mitigate the urgent needs of the hundreds of thousands directly affected by the hurricane. Several coordinating meetings were held in the office of the resident coordinator with government officials and national and international institutions.

United Nations system: programme objective, implementing institutions and time-frame

17. The overall objective of the UNDP/United Nations emergency and rehabilitation programme was to support the Government of the Dominican Republic in the implementation of a successful transition process from the initial emergency situation towards an integrated and sustainable development, benefiting the most vulnerable groups affected by the hurricane. The UNDP/United Nations programme is being implemented through the National Planning Office of the Technical Secretariat of the Presidency and supported directly by the UNDP office, as well as by two UNDP projects, DOM/99/001 (formerly DOM/97/009), "Sustainable human development", and DOM/99/003 (formerly DOM/96/010), "Housing and human settlements". The Programme is scheduled to be completed

in July 1999. However, it is hoped that additional contributions will make it possible either to intensify and/or extend programme activities.

Activities and beneficiaries: emergency relief and rehabilitation

18. Programme activities initially focused on direct emergency relief to refugees, as well as the provision of equipment to the central governmental institutions, with a view to improving their capacity for coordinating and implementing the emergency phase. Programme activities have been subsequently directed at the rehabilitation process, emergency preparedness, housing reconstruction and access to safe water, the beneficiaries of which total 110,000 persons. In order to support an integrated development process, special attention has been given to training and income generation, with special emphasis on improving the situation of women.

Seminars and missions

19. In October 1998, a comprehensive, multisectoral, socio-economic evaluation of the damages caused by hurricane Georges in the Dominican Republic was prepared by an Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) multidisciplinary mission. In February 1999, a national seminar was organized and co-financed by the UNDP/United Nations programme in order to prepare an integrated national evaluation report of hurricane Georges. The final report was released at the beginning of March 1999, within the framework of a regional seminar on disaster preparedness and mitigation in the Americas, held at Santo Domingo from 16 to 19 February 1999. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Response Division of UNDP participated actively in the meeting and organized a joint inter-agency monitoring visit to the programme site (for a detailed view of the mission's activities, see http://www.pnud.org.do).

Additional assistance by the international community

20. Bilateral and other multilateral emergency assistance during the emergency and in the months that followed has been consistent with the urgent needs of those most affected by the hurricane. The Government of the United States of America, through its various branches, provided significant relief through the provision of grants totalling $29 million to be used in reconstruction and emergency preparedness, as well as $180,000 in wood materials for housing reconstruction. Most significantly, it intervened with the Paris Club regarding the postponement of $100 million due for repayment in the year 2000. The World Bank approved a $111 million loan for emergency preparedness and rehabilitation, and the Governments of France, Japan, S pain and Italy also contributed, in varying degrees, with financial and in-kind assistance, as did most of the Latin American Governments.

21. An immediate response emergency operation was approved by the World Food Programme (WFP) for $200,000 to start assisting 25,000 families for one month with cereals, vegetable oil and sugar. An assessment mission visited the country (jointly with FAO and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) in early October 1998, and on 9 November 1998 WFP approved an emergency operation (No. 6070) for $4.7 million to assist 200,000 persons during three months in order to alleviate the suffering and hardship of the people affected by hurricane Georges, particularly the most vulnerable. Based on monitoring findings, WFP estimates that about 80,000 persons of the originally targeted will no longer need emergency food aid; however, the remaining caseload of 120,000 persons will continue to face a very insecure food situation. For this reason, an expansion of four months (June to September 1999) has been approved to sustain the affected persons during the recovery period and mitigate the risk of serious malnutrition. The cost to WFP of this expansion is $4.3 million.

22. A study on needs assessment following hurricane Georges, conducted by the United States Centre for Disease Control, indicates that 40 per cent of selected families had insufficient food for a period greater or equal to six days per week, and that the availability of food decreased dramatically after the hurricane. At a PAHO/Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs conference on disaster preparedness and mitigation in the Americas, in which WFP participated, it was proposed that WFP be one of the responsible organizations (at the country level) to assist the National Coordination Agency in defining the period of free food assistance, as well as in promoting the implementation of productive and/or reconstruction activities. The emergency operation is being implemented through international and national non-governmental organizations, as well as the government institutions concerned.

The experience thus far

23. The Government's emergency programme has thus far shown remarkable progress. Access to electricity and to safe water was reinstated to previous levels within a month of the hurricane. As of April 1999, an additional 91,000 new

housing units will be constructed through a joint venture recently established between the Government-owned Housing Bank and national private sector investors.

24. As to the United Nations emergency and reconstruction programme, it continues to enjoy a high degree of participation and co-financing (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Emergency Response Division of UNDP, Norway, Luxembourg and the Holy See), as well as remarkably strong community support for its project activities. Moreover, the special combination of inputs — technical assistance and emergency supplies on the one hand and materials for construction and water equipment on the other (benefiting approximately 110,000 people) — has made possible the implementation of an integrated emergency and rehabilitation programme whose overall objective is to facilitate a smooth and sustainable transition from "emergency to development", through effective and direct involvement of the beneficiaries themselves. Similarly, United Nations programme has strengthened sustainability by allowing for efficient training in disaster preparedness vis-à-vis some of the most vulnerable population groups. In the case of the United Nations-organized housing construction and reconstruction at Sabana Perdida and at Bateyes, new and better techniques are being implemented to make housing more resistant to natural disasters, such as hurricanes and floods.

25. In subsequent months and before the arrival of the next hurricane season (beginning 1 June 1999), the Government, with assistance from the United Nations and other multilateral organizations, in particular the World Bank, gave special attention to preparedness activities at both the central and community levels with a view to focusing on how best to manage and mitigate future disaster situations.

VI. Haiti

Background

26. Given the erratic pathway of the storm, some localized severe damage occurred outside its direct eye-path. High population density, subsistence living standards, widespread soil erosion and lack of disaster management magnified the hurricane's impact.

27. According to government figures, 242 people died, 42 were missing and 124 injured. The Government also estimated that about 385,000 people were affected, and 4,500 houses were destroyed and 16,000 damaged.

United Nations system response to hurricane Georges emergency and rehabilitation phases

28. Building upon an already existing coordination mechanism, the office of the resident coordinator played an important coordination role during the emergency and rehabilitation phases. This mechanism is the main forum on disaster management, where representatives from government institutions, donor organizations, United Nations agencies and local and international non-governmental organizations regularly meet in Haiti.

29. In order to strengthen national capacities in disaster preparedness, mitigation and management, UNDP and WHO/PAHO have, following the aftermath of hurricane Georges, designed and launched longer-term capacity-building programmes. While the WHO/PAHO initiative focuses mainly on human resources development, the UNDP project aims to (a) strengthen the institutional and organizational capacities of the Directorate of Civil Protection, and (b) support the preparation of a national disaster management plan. Those initiatives are closely coordinated with a parallel EU/European Community Humanitarian Office-sponsored capacity-building project.

World Bank: hurricane Georges recovery report

30. The World Bank commissioned an evaluation shortly after the hurricane. The main findings of the mission's report (hurricane Georges recovery report), issued in November 1998, were the following:

(a) The estimates of the direct damage from hurricane Georges range from about US$ 80 million to more than $180 million. Based on preliminary data from FAO and government sources, the lower estimate appears to be the most likely figure. However, total losses, including indirect and secondary losses, could more than double the $80 million of direct losses. In comparison with the gross domestic product (GDP), losses are significant. Direct losses amount to nearly 3 per cent of total GDP, and total losses (direct, indirect and secondary) could be double that amount;

(b) The private sector suffered over 80 per cent of the direct losses, mainly in agriculture and housing. Agriculture crop and livestock losses alone were estimated at $53 million. Public losses in infrastructure, including agricultural roads ($2 million), irrigation ($2 million) and transport ($8 million), were estimated to amount to $15 million;

(c) The damages where located mainly in the areas of South-East and Bas-Artibonite, particularly in areas near rivers, where extensive flooding took place. By the time the

hurricane reached Haiti, most of its wind forces were reduced but it did produce heavy rainfalls;

(d) The direct losses were estimated to have a negative impact on the balance of payment of about $43 million. This includes export losses and increased food imports, as well as material imports for the recovery phase;

(e) The Government of Haiti has established an inter-ministerial commission, headed by the Ministry of Planning, to coordinate recovery activities. This commission has proposed a draft programme for rehabilitation and reconstruction, amounting to $42 million, that correctly emphasizes agriculture and rural development.

Progress in the rehabilitation and reconstruction phase

31. Several major donors, including the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, CIDA and the European Union, have redirected part of their assistance programmes to meet some of the rehabilitation and reconstruction costs, in particular in the areas of rural infrastructure (rural roads and irrigation schemes), highway maintenance and repair, and safety net provisions (including provision of agricultural inputs).

32. USAID, in particular through its PL 480 programme (a monetized food aid scheme), has provided, in addition to its regular aid programme, a significant additional contribution. Most of the USAID-supported rehabilitation and reconstruction projects are implemented by non-governmental organizations.

33. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has provided a significant contribution of $20 million as support to the balance of payment in the aftermath of hurricane Georges.

VII. Cuba

34. Cuba was struck by two consecutive disasters during 1998:

(a) A prolonged drought related to the "El Niño" disturbance, whose effects particularly affected the eastern provinces of the country during the summer, at a moment when Cuban agriculture was showing signs of a modest increase (end of 1995 and 1996);

(b) Hurricane Georges, which affected Cuban territory from 22 to 26 September 1998, striking the same provinces severely. The tragic consequences of this hurricane as it struck the Caribbean basin are well known, although in the case of Cuba, owing to preventive measures adopted by the Government only six deaths were reported.

35. In terms of emergency relief and recovery and rehabilitation plans, the United Nations system reacted to both emergencies in a coordinated manner. In July 1998, as a result of drought reports from the eastern provinces of Cuba, a joint WFP, FAO, UNDP and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) mission visited the area, issuing a report on prevailing conditions.

36. With the above-mentioned report as supporting document and following a request from the Government of Cuba, the United Nations system, through the Geneva-based Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, launched an international appeal in July 1998.

37. On 28 August 1998, in a reinforcement action, WFP began an emergency operation valued at more than $20 million, which was intended to compensate the shortage of foodstuffs until rehabilitation plans started to bear fruit. The success of that operation still depends on the availability of resources and the pledges formulated by donor countries.

38. However, shortly after these activities were initiated, the passing of hurricane Georges complicated the situation and seriously aggravated the emergency. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs mobilized contributions in the amount of $329,000 for relief and immediate rehabilitation, and facilitated the shipment of relief supplies. In September 1998, WFP approved a nine-month emergency operation in the amount of $20.3 million to assist 615,195 persons, mainly schoolchildren and vulnerable groups. Local purchases of food initiated the operation, which is due to end in October 1999. The situation is critical since drought is again affecting the eastern provinces.

39. In October 1998, realizing that the problems generated by both disasters should be analysed in the context of the economic crisis affecting the country, a joint assessment was undertaken by the Cuban Government, the United Nations disaster management team in Cuba and a mission from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. On 18 December 1998, as a result of and after a demanding process, the United Nations launched the International Appeal for Assistance to Cuba, in response to the double emergency situation. An information meeting for member States and United Nations system organizations was co-Chaired by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP at Geneva on 26 February 1999 to present an update of the emergency situation and the appeal.

40. The comprehensive response of the international community, including donor countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, is summarized in the table. Some $15 million has been mobilized out of the $87 million of required support identified in the Consolidated Appeal. About $13 million has been used for emergency supplies, and the remaining $2 million has been allocated to recovery and rehabilitation programmes.

41. It is worth noting that:

(a) Emergency items are still needed in terms of food supplies (special attention should be paid to the WFP appeal);

(b) Recent evidence confirms that the drought is again affecting the eastern provinces;

(c) In 1998, GDP grew only by 1.2 per cent, indicating that the rate of growth of the Cuban economy is still slowing down and therefore continuing the trend indicated in the Consolidated Appeal.

Emergency situation in Cuba: United Nations Consolidated Appeal, action taken as at 31 March 1999

Organization/country	Contribution	Amount (United States dollars)
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs	Deposits for drinking water	30 000
Japan	Filters and water deposits, soap, towels and medical supplies for hospitals and others (through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs)	169 200
Japan	Food supply (through the assistance requested by WFP)	770 000
Japan	Bilateral assistance for the purchase of rice	8 600 000
Norway	Deposits for drinking water	29 100
Norway	Contribution for hurricane victims	97 000
Spain	Food supply (through the assistance requested by WFP)	332 200
Switzerland	Food supply (through the assistance requested by WFP)	355 000
Luxembourg	Bilateral assistance for the purchase of foodstuffs	70 500
Italy	Additional support to the programme of human development at the local level for prevention and rehabilitation (agriculture, housing, education, food etc.)	1 000 000
Médecins sans frontières	Water purification tablets and others	80 000
Embassy of Canada	To be determined	50 000
Israel	Weed killers, irrigation equipment, vegetable seeds	–
Germany	To be determined (handed to the German Red Cross)	71 400[a]
European Union	Rehabilitation of homes; sanitation and water systems	510 200
WFP	Requested contribution of 34,000 tons of foodstuffs (rice, pulses, edible oil, canned fish, wheat) for 615,000 beneficiaries during nine months, to be delivered to schools, hospitals, infirmaries, centres for people with disabilities and maternity homes. Total amount requested: 20 000 000	1 000 000
FAO	Project for the rehabilitation of agricultural and cattle production	400 000
UNICEF	Resources to improve and increase the availability of drinking water to vulnerable groups in Las Tunas and Holguin provinces	200 000

Organization/country	Contribution	Amount (United States dollars)
UNDP	Programme for the dissemination of crops (rice, beans, corn and sunflower). Total amount: 1 800 000	600 000
UNDP	Communication system for emergency situations	40 000
UNDP	Logistical support to water distribution	60 000
Sweden	Contribution to the UNDP programme for extension of crops	500 000[b]
Total		**14 964 600**

[a] 120 000 deutsche mark.
[b] 4 000 000 Swedish Kronor

Notes

[1] See CDERA-USAID, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs situation reports, 1998-1999.

[2] See Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, "Dominican Republic: evaluation of the damage caused by hurricane Georges", 1998.